



ARE TEMPOROMANDIBULAR JOINT DISORDERS (TMJ) SETTING YOUR TEETH ON EDGE?

Have you ever been bothered by a clicking in your jaw? That, as well as pain in the jaw joint and its surrounding tissues or limitations of the jaw bone are jointly known as “temporomandibular joint disorders” or TMJ.

Up to 75% of adults show signs of this condition when examined, and up to one third have at least one symptom. Only 5% seek help.

Some people have associated headache and neck pain.

Most people don't know they have this problem. It could mean you suffer needlessly until TMJ is finally diagnosed as a cause of your headache, pain or discomfort.

The pain of temporomandibular joint disorders typically occurs at the jaw joint just in front of the ear. However, it can lead to headache and migraine, as well as neck pain.

Factors that can cause your TMJ

The causes TMJ disorders are not well understood and could be caused by a number of factors, including:

- Jaw clenching / teeth grinding
- Lip biting
- Posture
- Stress
- Abnormal joint
- Abnormal dental occlusion
- Jaw muscle balance problems
- Arthritis
- Past jaw or facial trauma

How doctors treat TMJ

In an emergency, when your mouth becomes stuck open due to a dislocated jaw joint, you'll most likely be taken to hospital and given a relaxant drug. The doctor will pull to relocate the jaw in its proper position.

Otherwise, depending on the type of problem with the jaw joint, you may be treated effectively with:

- Anti-inflammatory, muscle relaxant or antidepressant drugs
- Exercises
- Relaxation techniques, stress management or counselling
- Physiotherapy, massage or acupuncture
- Injection into the joint
- Botox to relax overactive, tight muscles.

With today's overloaded lifestyles, rest and relaxation play important roles in preventing the tension that tends to cause jaw clenching and teeth grinding. Short of seeking professional help, your best defence against TMJ is making sure you manage your stress levels and relax enough.

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